

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114  
617-626-1700 fax: 617-626-1850 [www.mass.gov/agr](http://www.mass.gov/agr)



CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO  
Lt. Governor

MATTHEW A. BEATON  
Secretary

JOHN LEBEAUX  
Commissioner

November 2, 2015

### **What Poultry Owners Need to Know About Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza**

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) has been working with its sister agencies and federal partners to develop an emergency response plan for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Between mid-December 2014 and June 2015, there were several outbreaks of HPAI affecting birds in 21 different states from the West Coast to the Midwest. This strain of HPAI is deadly in poultry, but it has not been found to affect humans.

Due to the mixing of migratory birds from different flyways this summer in Canada, it remains likely that HPAI exposed birds are traveling along the East Coast during the current southern migration. Ongoing, routine testing of wild birds and domestic poultry is being conducted, and to date no HPAI has been found within Massachusetts.

MDAR is seeking to educate poultry owners about the risk this virus poses to their birds in hopes that every precaution will be taken to prevent their flocks from being exposed. Additionally, MDAR wants poultry owners to understand what will happen if their flock becomes infected.

HPAI can infect all types of chickens, turkeys and many other kinds of birds. HPAI can strike suddenly and spread fast. Infected poultry may die within hours. The virus can be spread by contact with infected birds or contaminated materials. Some signs of illness may include:

- Respiratory disease, including coughing, sneezing, and snicking
- Decreased feed consumption
- Decreased egg production or misshapen eggs
- Swollen heads
- Swollen or discolored wattles or combs
- Sudden mortality (flock owners in the previously affected states have reported sudden dramatic mortality increases in their flocks with no other apparent signs)

There are a few simple steps bird owners can take to try to protect their flocks from avian influenza:

- Wild migratory birds are natural carriers for HPAI. Preventing wild birds from mixing with domestic flocks is essential to disease control. Poultry owners should assure their birds are kept away from wild birds, particularly waterfowl.
- Avoid unnecessary movement of poultry between locations and be aware of the potential to carry HPAI contaminated materials onto properties where birds are kept.
- New birds should be completely isolated for at least one month prior to being added into the flock. Birds that are returning home from fairs or shows should also be isolated from the home flock as if they were new arrivals.